

## **Reproductive Freedom and Church-State Separation: They are Inextricably Linked - Americans United**

Abortion and reproductive freedom are church-state issues. Americans United President and CEO Rachel Laser made this clear in a May 11 press statement in which [she observed](#), “The foundational principle of separation of church and state safeguards our right to live as ourselves and believe as we choose. That includes making personal decisions that also have serious medical implications free from discrimination and political interference. We will continue to fight for nationwide abortion access because reproductive freedom is religious freedom.”

Rabbi Robert Barr of Congregation Beth Adam in Loveland, Ohio, and Rachel Smith, its board president, also skillfully fleshed out this same argument in a recent *Cincinnati Enquirer* [opinion column](#).

Referring to Supreme Court Justice Samuel A. Alito’s leaked drafted opinion that would overturn *Roe v. Wade*, the two write, “The Constitution prohibits the government from favoring one religious view over another or favoring religion over non-religion, and yet that is exactly what this proposed opinion will do. This court’s decision would adopt a narrow religious-based definition of when life begins and impose it on everyone in our nation. While some religions believe life begins at conception, others do not. Yet, the court will impose one set of religious beliefs on everyone.”

Barr, a member of AU’s [Faith Advisory Council](#), and Smith point out that in Judaism, a fetus is not considered an independent person and abortion is called for if the life of the pregnant person is at stake.

Yet, they observe, reversing *Roe* and allowing “states to adopt draconian anti-abortion laws means that an extreme religious perspective will become the basis for state laws while other religious perspectives are ignored. The wall between religion and government will have crumbled.”

Indeed, it will. And as Laser and several commentators have noted, religious extremists are not likely to stop at trashing *Roe*. The right of adults to access and use birth control rests on the same right to privacy that buttressed the *Roe* decision. Some Christian nationalists are already attacking certain forms of birth control.

These are perilous times. Barr and Smith have outlined the threat to reproductive freedom and made its connection to church-state separation clear. The next steps are up to us. Raise your voice and...